

PLEBISCITE FOR ALSACE-LORRAINE HELD IMPOSSIBLE

Distinguished French Socialist Declares That Proposition Would Ignore Repeated Protestations of Alsatisans That They Desire to Be Part of French Nation—Would Be Impracticable, He Asserts.

(BY M. ALBERT THOMAS)

The Great French Socialist Leader and Ex-Minister of Munitions. My comrades of the British Labor party have, in a recent declaration, defined their views on the subject of war aims. They have, in particular, made their position clear as to the question of Alsace-Lorraine. The Labor party have renewed their condemnation of the crime against the peace of the world by which Alsace-Lorraine was torn from France in 1871. They emphatically express their sympathy with the unfortunate inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine. They demand, "in accordance with the declarations of the French Socialists, that these populations shall be allowed, under the protection of the super-national authority, or league of Nations, freely to decide what shall be their future political position."

My short stay in London during the last few days afforded me an opportunity of discussing that resolution with some of my British friends. They all said that their wish had been to harmonize their own formula with that adopted in conference resolutions and other statements by French Socialists. They emphasized this point, that above all they were anxious to be in full agreement with us, or, rather, to accept our views and make them their own. They trusted our will to respect scrupulously, even when our national interests are involved, the principles of democracy.

But I am afraid the detailed considerations in our memorandum in answer to the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee at Stockholm have led our friends a little astray, and I will now try to give the clearest possible statement of our views.

What French Socialists Say
Our British labor friends have been led to believe we were in favor of a plebiscite. They knew that we always firmly upheld the right of peoples to dispose of themselves. They thought that we could but accept that principle automatically to the case of Alsace-Lorraine. Alsace-Lorraine would recover her right freely to decide, probably under the control of an international or a Franco-German Commission, whether she is to remain German or return to France.

This is not the policy advocated by the declarations of the French Socialists. What they say is this: The right of France to Alsace-Lorraine remains unaltered; it was in violation of the right of peoples to self-determination that Alsace-Lorraine was wrenched from France; the treaty of Frankfurt, to which France had to submit, has been torn to pieces by Germany's own will in 1914; the document by which Alsace-Lorraine was surrendered to Germany has now been destroyed; the right of France remains immutable; therefore Alsace-Lorraine must come back to France.

But French Socialists further add (and this may have misled our British friends) that France, acting of her own free will, will do herself no harm by going so far, in her regard for the right of self-determination, as to agree, after Alsace-Lorraine has resumed her place in the French community, to an consultation of the populations there, under the control of the League of Nations. What is proposed here is a plebiscite which would decide whether Alsace-Lorraine would declare that they wished to be French again.

I think I have made the distinction clear. I may add that, while this view is held by an overwhelming majority of the French socialist party, there are members of the party (and I am bound to say I am one of them) as well as some socialists of Alsatian and Lorrain origin who are afraid that even such a consultation may be a dangerous concession, leading to a dubious interpretation; they adopt the formula of the Republican League of Alsace-Lorraine, and declare that a consultation cannot be forced upon these populations; it belongs to Alsace-Lorraine herself to assert in her own way, at the moment and in the form she prefers, her will to belong to France.

Our views being thus clearly restated, I wish to add a few words of explanation for our British friends.

Why Plebiscite is Impossible
Why do French and Alsatians, in this special case of Alsace-Lorraine, think that no plebiscite should take place in spite of their claim for the peoples of the right to dispose of themselves?

The reason is a simple one. The question is not to give a population the right for the first time to decide its own fate. It was in 1871 that the right of peoples to dispose of themselves was violated. The most characteristic feature of the French nation is her complete unity, and the fact that all the populations of France have unquestionably expressed their desire to belong to the French community. No people in the world has attained to such an absolute unity, such an homogeneous national structure. While Great Britain shows to the world the finest realization of the Imperial idea, France is the very example and prototype of the nation.

In 1790, after the alternative changes which had made Alsace and Lorraine now French, now German territories, the Lorrainers and the Alsatians, on the great day of the Federation, solemnly declared their resolution to be part of the French nation at Strasbourg, Mulhouse and in other Alsatian towns, the people showed by stirring demonstrations how enthusiastically they proclaimed their French nationality. During the 19th century, no separatist tendency ever found any expression in Alsace or in Lorraine. In 1871, when the two provinces were violently taken from France, the inhabitants raised before the Bordeaux Assembly a moving protest, in which they declared, that, should even centuries pass, their right to be French would remain indefeasible.

In 1874, they protested in the Reichstag against the annexation made against their will, and by which they had been handed over to Germany "like mere cattle."

During 47 years the protest of Alsace-Lorraine never ceased to make itself heard in various ways. On the eve of the present war, when the Sabers incidents took place a Prussian officer could say that the German army in Alsace was practically in enemy country. Since the beginning of the war hundreds of sentences have been passed by German judges on Alsatians, whose guilt was to have expressed their French feelings.

To agree to a plebiscite under such circumstances would not only amount to cancelling the repeated protestations of 1871, 1914 and of all times. It would be equivalent to a declaration that our right has become null and void. It would amount to admitting that the treaty of Frankfurt is still valid, and it would vindicate Germany's action when in 1871 she violated the right of peoples to dispose of themselves. It is because of this right that the method of the plebiscite cannot be accepted.

The protest, which never ceased since 1871, establishes the fact of Alsace-Lorraine's unvaried desire to belong to France. France feels certain that, should a plebiscite be taken, the result would be in her favor. But we must not forget that there are in Alsace-Lorraine 400,000 "immigrants," that is to say, German settlers, many of whom have been sent there as officials of the German Empire; they no doubt, would declare for the endurance of German rule.

Let us suppose that, instead of 400,000 Germany had sent to Alsace-Lorraine 1,000,000 immigrants. Let us suppose that she had turned out by such massacres as her Turkish disciples are now perpetrating in Armenia; what would then happen if a plebiscite were taken? Would the right of peoples to dispose of themselves make it imperative to sanction by a vote, the result of which, in such circumstances, would be a foregone conclusion, the crime Germany committed in 1871?

It is therefore impossible, from the point of view of morality as well as from that of legality—if the right of peoples to dispose of themselves be adhered to—make the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France conditional on the taking of a plebiscite.

Would Not Work

But let us now for a moment admit that, by a concession which is really an impossible one, France were to consent to a plebiscite. We declare that it could not work in practice. First of all there would be conditions of time to settle—when should the plebiscite take place? Would it be when the country is still occupied by German armies; or how long after the occupation by the French? Or would it be under the guarantees of neutrality? In each case the consequence would be to lay the two provinces open to every kind of electoral contest, which would be the more serious because the question this time would not be of a choice between individuals, but between conditions which would decide the fate of the whole community.

German propaganda would be rampant. The threats which often weighed so heavily on those populations and paralyzed their political life would unavoidably react upon the people. Would not both French and German governments be led to the making of promises, the giving of more or less official pledges, to influence the vote? And would the question of right, under such conditions, remain in full light before the peoples concerned?

Then—and this is more important—who would be entitled to vote? The register unfortunately, could not include those who, having enlisted in the French army, gave their lives for the cause of Alsace-Lorraine. But only the genuine Alsatians and Lorrainers of 1871 and their offspring, including the hundreds of thousands who have left the country since and because it was annexed to Germany, should take part in the plebiscite. Under no circumstance would the immigrants be admitted to vote.

Would such a plebiscite—although the only one that would be morally admissible—finally settle the dispute between France and Germany?

Therefore it must be concluded that the plebiscite is not only inacceptable in principle but also impossible in practice. Those who might persist in objecting that the right of peoples to dispose of themselves cannot be vindicated by any other method, must be reminded that the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine have unceasingly expressed their feelings. Since 1871 there has been, so to speak, an uninterrupted plebiscite. The population of Alsace-Lorraine has constantly refused to accept the treaty of Frankfurt. We only state actual facts when we say that the case of Alsace-Lorraine is the same as that of our invad-

WAR BOARD NOW ASKS FOR EXTRA SUM OF \$2,000

In addition to its original requisition for \$13,500, the War Bureau, through its chairman, Justice George W. Wheeler, asked for \$2,000 more at the meeting of the Board of Appropriation. Of the total amount requested more than \$7,000 is for salaries.

The requisitions of several other departments, including tax collector, Board of Appraisal, town clerk, building commissioners, city engineer, city attorney and City Hall committee. Requisitions of the Department of Charities were discussed separately with Supt. Angus Thorne. The sub-committees will meet again tonight, tomorrow and Friday.

BRIEF NEWS NOTES

With his pet dog dead beside him, Gideon Pumpelly, of Oswego, N. Y., well known trapper, was found in his garage.

A state division of the National Employment Service, to find and distribute workers among the various war industries, was organized at Hartford.

More than 40 organizations of railroad employees are represented at a conference in Pittsburgh on forming a division of the American Federation of Labor.

Lord Northcliffe in an interview declared that Great Britain went through a phase of German propaganda like the strike reports and now pays no attention to it.

Sunderland House, the home of the Grand Duchess of Marlborough in England, has been commandeered for the use of officials of the Inter-Allied Council.

Wilbur Fisk, president of the Hudson tubes, asked Governor Edge, of New Jersey, to relieve the water famine in the state, saying all the railroads may be tied up.

Franz von Rintelen, active German agent, and 10 other Germans were found guilty of conspiring to place bombs on transatlantic vessels leaving American ports.

A committee has been formed to raise funds in New York for crippled Italian soldiers and refugees from the invaded districts. The money will be sent to Milan.



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ed provinces. Just as the German armies shall evacuate these they must and shall evacuate Alsace-Lorraine. The only difference is that their occupation has lasted three and a half years, and that of Alsace-Lorraine 47 years.

International Question

There is one more point on which I wish to lay special stress, speaking not only to my Socialist comrades, but to all our British friends, whatever party they may belong to. I frequently hear people repeating: "We English will fight for Alsace-Lorraine because France demands Alsace-Lorraine." Others will go even further and say: "It is enough that our French Allies demand Alsace-Lorraine to determine us never to lay down our arms until she has recovered that country."

We can but deeply feel such a delicate expression of complete friendship and of unconditional loyalty to the bond of alliance between the two nations. Would it be possible to show more unreserved confidence? But if France's aims were unjust would the British people be bound to take the same attitude?

Supposing France wanted to annex part of Germany, would the British people agree? France does not claim Alsace-Lorraine only because she is her own, but by claiming Alsace-Lorraine, she demands that justice shall prevail. The question of Alsace-Lorraine is not merely a French question; it is an international question, in which mankind is interested.

Alsace-Lorraine kept under German rule means permanent violation of the right in modern Europe. It means that a just peace, conformable to the rights of nations, has not been secured. It means that the reign of justice has not superseded the hegemony of brutal force.

It is not only because the soldiers of the Marne and those of Verdun, by their heroic sacrifices in defense of our common civilization, have deserved to be rewarded by the restoration to France of her national unity, that Alsace and Lorraine must go back to France; it is because of the common will of the allies to secure the restoration of justice in the world. Great Britain makes the French claim her own not only because of her love for France, but because she has been, at all times, the defender of right.—By The International News Bureau, Inc., Boston, Mass.

AUTO THIEVES BUSIEST TIME NEAR HOLIDAYS

Investigation of statistics on motor car thefts reveals the fact that more cars are usually stolen around the first of January than at any other period of the year. One reason is that a large number of cars has been sold during the holidays. The cars are new models and of more value than those in use for a year or more. The owner hardly knows it when he sees it from a dozen other cars of the same make. It has no identifying marks. After he has owned it long enough to be in an accident or two, it has its own distinguishing characteristics. It is winter, and when an owner drives up he lets his engine run so that all his efforts to do is to step in and help himself. The weather is against all possible pursuers, with the result that the thief takes time by the forelock and makes his haul while the year is young.

Before a car is stolen its habits, as they are known in the profession, are watched. The thieves know the routine of the car's life; they know where it goes, when it goes, and for how long it will remain unwatched. If the thieves are to "lift" a car, while the car is waiting in front of a man's office, they do not simply get in and ride away. The car is watched until they know with some degree of accuracy how long it will stand unoccupied, and when the opportune time comes they avail themselves of the car's wait and speed away over a route previously determined.

No fewer than five persons are usually implicated in the stealing of a car. They are the locator, the grabber, the garage owner, the mechanic, and the fence. The "locator" is the one who picks out the car to be stolen; the "grabber" is the one who drives the car off; the mechanic disguises the car while the "fence" disposes of the stolen property.

Of the locks designed to prevent theft the commonest is the gasoline lock, but it has certain disadvantages. There are a number of locks for cutting off the fuel supply, one being a combination lock worked on the principle of a post office box, to appeal to the man who has the habit of leaving his key in his other clothes. The lock is worked by tumblers which fall into the pipe line, cut off the fuel. But this does not keep the thief away, for the thief of today goes prepared for such an emergency. He not only carries a small kit of tools with him, but in addition a bottle. In the bottle is gasoline. He observes the habits of the car; he knows approximately when the owner will return, and so he does not even have to test the car to see if the fuel lock is on. He knows this car has such a lock and is prepared. With his steel nippers he cuts the fuel line below the lock and with the rubber tubing from his beer bottle feeds gasoline into the carburetor. He is off to a garage, while the owner comes out and puzzles his head how anybody could have moved his car when he simply never left it stand without locking.

The only safeguard is to remove the motor, for without this there is no ignition and motors are not easily duplicated in case the thief wanted to slip in another.

Too much dependence must not be placed on the gasoline lock without preparatory caution on the part of the driver. He must remember that there is enough gasoline in the carburetor to carry him a block or even two blocks, even though the fuel line is cut off. The thief can thus get the car out of sight and around the corner and there doctor it at will. This objection to a fuel lock may be overcome by shutting off the power a block before the point where the car is to be stopped. If this is forgotten, the driver may keep the engine running until it is itself.

Appliances for the steering wheel, the gears, or the brakes that make use of a chain or some mechanical part are only a moment's hindrance to a thief. He has come equipped with pliers for all that.

The commonest lock, and the one that the average inventor has his inequality upon, is a mechanism for locking the wheel. Many of these are home-made. These can be nipped by the thief, and especially so if he is working under cover of night, but there is another objection to them that is a bad handicap to the new owner who puts his faith in them. In most cases they are fastened by the fire jaws. This by reason of the fact that if a fire should break out and the fire trucks came clattering up the firemen would not be able to get the chained car out of the way.

In addition, there is another discouraging feature in placing one's faith in a lock. An owner looks his car with a patent device that human ingenuity cannot break and goes into a store for a few minutes. While he is gone a working man in overalls comes down the street in a wrecking car. In his hand is a piece of paper. Backing up to the car, he fastens on a towline and is just starting off when a policeman comes up and asks him what he is doing. His answer is that he is from a garage and to show the officer the slip of paper bearing the make of the car, its number and location.

The man in overalls supplies the power, and the car is off; safely out of sight, an accomplice steps out, unfasts the towline, gets in, and joyously rides away.

Certain factors removed from locks are, however, working to make life happier for the car owner. One is happier for the car owner. One is of Automotive Engineers that the location of all engine numbers be standardized, the location being on the crank case, prior to the front end, as near the middle as possible. Another suggestion is to make the license number and the engine number the same. Another plan, originated in Toledo, is to stamp by chemical process the serial number of the car on the windshield with the name of the owner and his home address. In case of theft a broken windshield would immediately arouse suspicion.

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DRAFTED QUAKERS ORDERED TO CAMP

New York, Feb. 6.—Announcement was made yesterday by the District Draft Appeals Board that members of the Society of Friends or "Quakers," the Plymouth Brethren, and the Seventh Day Adventists will be certified for non-combatant service under the draft regulations. They will be sent to the camps, but will not be called upon to fight.

The decision to recognize the anti-war views of these sects was reached by the board after the Rev. E. Edward Young, pastor of the Bedford Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn and a member of the appeals body, had recommended that allowance be made in their behalf.

Theodore F. Dunoulin, secretary to the board, said the body had refused to classify as conscientious objectors members of the Assemblies of God, the Seventh Day Christians, the Apostolic Church and several sects of lesser membership.

The board members also decided that an officer of the Salvation Army cannot be exempted as a minister of religion, because he cannot perform marriages or administer religious rites. Dr. Young, to whom all questions involving issues of religion are referred, said the board members are "only endeavoring to comply with the law and the regulations."

MEXICAN ENVOYS QUIT ARGENTINA

Buenos Aires, Feb. 6.—The special Mexican embassy which arrived here some weeks ago, it is announced, will disband next Sunday. Louis Cabrera, head of the mission, will go to Paraguay; Gen. Montez will go to Chile and Gorazyn Ugarte will go to Brazil. All expect to return to Buenos Aires later.

Regarding the probable time when the proposed neutrality congress, which the Mexicans came to attend, will be held, the Argentine foreign minister says the date is very remote.

COAL BARGES STRANDED.

Old Saybrook, Feb. 5.—Four coal barges are stranded on a sand bar off Fenwick outer light today. All are laden and were bound eastward. Apparently the barges were crowded on the bar by the ice.

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